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A YEAR OF "BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION"

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The *Annual Report of Reforms and Progress in Chosen* now available in English as issued by the Japanese government possesses, both in itself and in what it discloses, a peculiar interest. It reports the first full year of peaceful development since the annexation of Korea by Japan took place. It therefore bears directly on the problems, the solution of which determines the success or the failure of the governmental control of one country or race by another country and a more or less different race.

In Chosen (as the ancient Korea is now called) the chief economic interests are, and are destined for a long time to remain, the agricultural. To improve these conditions much was done during the last year by the way of establishing model farms, encouraging a better irrigation system, and controlling the overflow of the rivers. Japanese and Korean fruit growers have organized themselves for the better conduct of projects in horticulture. The climate and soil of the country are particularly adapted to raising the finest of apples and grapes; and owing to the dryness of the air these fruits are almost entirely free from rot. In South Chosen, where formerly one *koku* of uncleaned rice was obtained from three *koku* of unhulled rice, now three *koku* of uncleaned rice are obtained from six *koku* of unhulled rice. Local Monetary Circulation Associations, which the government subsidizes to the extent of *yen* 10,000 per Association, are loaning money at fair rates and transacting all the banking business for the small farmers. In close connection with this development goes hand in hand the development of afforestation, fisheries, and the local mining industries. The loans from the Associations just referred to are confined to the farmers of the middle and lower class;

and no loan exceeds the sum of 50 *yen*. But the best result of this is a spiritual one. The Koreans themselves, finding that nature rewards intelligence in the tilling of the soil, and that the government no longer robs them of the increased fruits of their more intelligent labors, are dropping their former lazy and thriftless habits and are becoming more industrious and prosperous.

The economic condition of the country is also being improved through the operation of various industrial and other public government enterprises. Such are the ginseng monopoly, the salt manufacture, coal mining and the lumber undertaking in the upper reaches of the Yalu River.

Next in importance, perhaps, and closely connected with the improvement of agriculture and manufactures, are the improvements of the means of intercommunication and transportation. In the old Korea there were no railways and indeed no roads of any kind. The construction of twenty-eight highways, with an aggregate length of 587 Ri (1 Ri = 3.9 Km.), are to be carried out in five consecutive years at a cost of *yen* 10,000,000. The large railway bridge over the Yalu River was completed in the late autumn of 1911, and through service between Fusan and Mukden is now in operation. The construction of the Seoul-Wonsan and the Taichon-Mukpo railways is so far advanced that both lines will be finished considerably before the fixed date of 1915. Extensive harbor improvements have been started at Fusan, Chemulpo, and Chinnampo, which are to be completed within six years. Fusan is rapidly being provided with wharves permitting the unloading of steamers of up to 20,000 tons. One result of all these economic changes is the growth of the mail service which showed an increase of 17,365,966 pieces, reaching the total of 100,365,966 in all.

Without rendering the taxation more, but rather much less burdensome, on account of the honesty and efficiency of the present officers connected with the department of finance, the revenues increased *yen* 4,150,000 and the foreign trade showed an increase of *yen* 13,000,000. The large excess of imports over exports was not really so disturbing as it might at first sight appear; since it was chiefly due to

these two causes: the withholding from immediate export of the rice, with the expectation of a rise in price, and the large amount of material imported in connection with public improvements of a permanent character.

The advances in the public system of education are being made as rapidly as the resources and receptive attitude of the people permit; and these advances are being very wisely confined for the most part to the establishment of primary and industrial schools with a view to elevate economically as well as educationally the great body of the common people. The well-known "imperial rescript" on education has been made the "guiding star" in Korea, as it was made years ago the guiding star of the old Japan. Thus primary common schools have been established in every district; higher common schools in the principal cities or towns; industrial schools in industrial centers; and a higher special school in Seoul. In this work of education the government is greatly assisted by the missionary schools, with which it seems now to have established terms of mutual understanding and good-will. For any lack of this in the past, the missionary schools were, I am credibly convinced, chiefly to blame.

Of the money needed for these educational and other means of a truly benevolent assimilation the Japanese government and the Imperial private funds have furnished no small amount. Of the "Extraordinary Imperial Donation Fund," amounting to *yen* 30,000,000, *yen* 17,000,000 have been distributed amongst twelve prefectures and three hundred and seventeen districts, as permanent funds for industrial purposes. With the annual interest, amounting to *yen* 869,000, have been established training stations for sericulture, weaving, manufacture of paper, mulberry gardens, and seedling stations. One hundred and thirty-four public common schools have also been newly established by the same funds, and three hundred and thirty-three private schools subsidized. The sum of *yen* 250,000 was given to the Classical Literary Association in order to encourage the study of the ancient ethical teaching by appointing *literati* of ability and reputation as lecturers. In Seoul (now named Keijo) an Imperial Charity Asylum has been founded to care for helpless orphans and the insane.

Quite a new regulation of the judicial system has been introduced into Chosen during the past year. The law courts of the Government-general comprise today: 1 supreme court, 3 appeal courts, 8 local courts with 12 branch courts, and 68 district courts. To these are attached 261 justices, 63 procurators, 4 chief clerks, 4 interpreter secretaries, and 429 clerks and interpreters.

The improved economic condition of the body of the common people of Chosen is indicated in a way by the increased deposits of the savings banks. According to an official report dated last July, an addition of 25,209 was made to the list of depositors in postal savings banks in Chosen, showing an increase of 80 per cent on the figures for the corresponding month of the preceding year. The gross amount of these deposits showed an increase of 20 per cent over that of last year.

More significant and promising, however, than these material improvements, especially in the eyes of those who are desirous in all such cases of an actual *assimilation*, of a truly *benevolent* sort, are certain developments of a social and moral character. To begin at the top, so to say, the ex-emperor and his father, the Princes Yi, are as private persons, apparently quite reconciled to their enjoyment of a happy and safe life—all the more, because they are no longer obliged to pay from their civil list of *yen* 1,500,000 an army of useless and thieving court officials. The young former crown-prince is a student of the Central Cadets School at Tokyo; and when he becomes the head of the nobility in Chosen, there is every reason to suppose that he will be not only a loyal, but an enthusiastic subject and supporter of the present emperor of Japan, who has been, in fact, his beloved elder brother ever since the late Prince Ito took the boy crown prince with him, for his education in Japan.

The most troublesome and obstructive class of the population of the old Korea was undoubtedly the so-called *yangban* and *literati*. These gentlemen not unnaturally objected to being displaced from their position of privilege as permitted a sort of monopoly in the government and the

connected exploitation and plundering of the common people of their fellow countrymen. On the whole, this class has been skillfully handled by the Japanese administration; and some progress has been made, not only in restricting their influence for evil but in converting them into useful citizens and loyal servants of the empire to which they now belong. Closely following upon annexation, the Korean nobility received the treatment of peers and were accorded very substantial grants of money. As might have been expected, a considerable number speedily squandered this money, either in foolish speculation or in free and idle living; but a certain proportion accepted the positions offered as paid lecturers on Confucian ethics, or teachers in the public or private schools, or holders of the minor government offices: a "good few" even entered the trade schools, or the stations for giving work to Koreans, and in these ways began to equip themselves for leading lives of thrift and industry. In this way the entire population is being stimulated and encouraged in habits which can be secured only under conditions where the workman knows that the government or some of its official thieves or minions are not going to deprive him of the rewards of his work. As helping in this same direction must be counted the increasingly successful efforts of the government to prevent the oppression and defrauding of the Koreans by all sorts of greedy and unscrupulous Japanese fortune-hunters.

There is yet plainer proof that the common people of Chosen are learning to prize the security, peace, and increased advantages of living, which are being strengthened and widened since Korea became an integral part of the Empire of Japan. In a growing number of cases, the two peoples are being united in business enterprises, and by ties of marriage and friendship. I have therefore no disposition to take back what I said six years ago in my book, *In Korea with Marquis Ito*.

Fifty years from now the distinction between Korean and Japanese, among the common people, will be very nearly if not quite completely, wiped out. Indeed, the two nations are of essentially the same derivation, so far as their dominant strains of ancestral

blood are concerned; and great as are the present differences between the Japanese in Japan and the Koreans in Korea, there is no reason why both Japanese and Koreans should not become essentially one people in Korea (p. 451).

A recent English writer, familiar with the work of Great Britain in India and less familiar with the work of Japan in Korea, has spoken with well-deserved commendation of the latter, but on the assumption that it was patterned after the British type and owed its success to its free borrowing from the example of the British government of India. But this assumption is warranted in only a rather limited degree. In one most important respect, the Japanese government in Korea has been from the first far wiser than has hitherto been the British government in India. I cannot better set forth what I have in mind than by making a somewhat extended quotation from the book to which one reference has already been made (see pp. 338, 339).

The second most important principle to set in control of the educational system of Korea is this. At first, and for a long time to come, it should be pretty strictly limited to fitting the Koreans themselves for a serviceable life, in Korea, and under the conditions, physical, social, and economic and political, of Korea. To educate—after the fashion followed too much by Great Britain in India—thousands of Korean *babus*, who thus become unfitted for the pressing needs of their country at this present day, and inclined to idleness rather than any hard and disagreeable but useful work, would be a mistake which neither the government nor the missions can afford to make. It is a fact, however, that, up to the present time, too large a proportion of the Korean youth, whether educated abroad or in the missionary schools at home, have lapsed into this worthless class. When called upon to *work*—manfully, faithfully, persistently, doing with his might what his hand finds to do—the Korean, like the Indian *babu*, is likely to show that his modern education has the more unfitted, rather than the better fitted, him for the effectual service of his country. If this should be the result of modern education, it would scarcely be more to be commended, under existing conditions in Korea, than was the education of the old-time Confucian Schools.

How the Japanese government in Chosen has sought to avoid this mistake, and what success it has attained in actually avoiding it, have been sufficiently set forth for our purposes at the present time.

The English writer who has already been quoted closes his favorable review of the experiences of Japan in Korean affairs with the sympathetic, the almost cynical remark, that the Japanese government in Chosen must be satisfied to be disliked and even hated by the Koreans, if only it can be feared and respected; just as the British government is regarded by the natives in British India. But we hope for better things. We hope for a truly benevolent assimilation. And there are good reasons to expect the realization of this hope. For, indeed the cases of these two foreign governments, in the part which they are playing in *race development* are in very important particulars, quite unlike. Before very long, Chosen ought to become an integral part of Japan, as loyal and patriotic as any part. If this should come about before we succeed in benevolently assimilating—Porto Rico, for example—we might be compelled to the reluctant confession of Gladstone in a letter to Madam Novikoff: “The history of governments is one of the most immoral parts of human history. I have often to say much ill of my own countrymen or their own governors.”